

MARINE ANIMAL OILS: REVISED DATA, 1912-39*

Domestic production of marine animal oils

According to the revised figures, domestic production of all marine animal oils, including fish-liver, fish, and marine mammal oils, increased from approximately 43 million pounds in 1912 to 270 million pounds in 1939. Apparent disappearance, or consumption, during the same period increased from about 55 million to 370 million pounds. Net imports, chiefly of the liver oils, also increased.

Imports and consumption of fish liver oils greatly reduced in 1940

Domestic consumption of fish-liver oils, used mainly in human and poultry nutrition for their vitamin A and D content, increased from about 12 million pounds in 1920 to nearly 69 million pounds in 1939. Primary disappearance in 1940, however, may total about 50 percent less than in 1939. Difficulties in obtaining imports of the liver oils from Europe have been chiefly responsible for the sharp decline in consumption this year.

Until recently, the relatively small production of liver oils by United States fisheries consisted largely of cod-liver and cod oils, the latter being derived from low-grade cod livers and being used exclusively for industrial purposes. But production of shark, halibut, and other liver oils has gained rapidly in importance in the past few years, and in 1939 such production exceeded that of cod and cod-liver oils. Total production of fish-liver oils in 1939, however, amounted only to 5.2 million pounds, whereas imports of fish-liver oils amounted to more than 66 million pounds.

Fish-liver oils, in the past, have been imported mainly from Norway, Iceland, Germany, the United Kingdom, Newfoundland, Canada, and Japan. Because of hostilities in the North Sea area, imports from Norway, Germany, and the United Kingdom virtually ceased shortly after the opening of the present war. And surplus production in British Empire areas was reserved largely for British account. Imports of cod and cod-liver oils during the first 9 months of 1940 totaled less than 14 million pounds compared with 53 million pounds in the corresponding period of 1939.

Certain of the fish-body oils, particularly sardine and menhaden, contain vitamin D, although not in the concentrated form in which this vitamin usually occurs in fish livers. Fish oils are being used to an increasing extent to supplement fish-liver oils in the manufacture of mixed poultry feeds.

Output of fish oils increased considerably in past 20 years

The total domestic output of fish oils increased from about 38 million pounds in 1920 to a peak of 266 million pounds in 1936, and

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amounted to 237 million pounds in 1939. Production in 1940 is likely to total less than in 1939, chiefly because of a delayed start in the California sardine fishery this fall.

The greater part of the enlarged fish-oil output since 1920 has been accounted for by increased production of sardine, or pilchard, oil on the West Coast, particularly after 1932. Production of herring oil has shown a fairly substantial increase since 1920; while moderate gains in output of salmon oil and tuna oil also have occurred. Most of the fish oils produced in this country are used domestically in the soap, drying-oils, and food-products industries in competition with other fats and oils. There has been a small balance of exports of fish oils in the past few years.

Domestic whaling activity at low level in 1940

Domestic production of whale oil from 1911 to 1935 was confined to operations of shore stations on the West Coast and in Alaska. During the summer seasons, 1936-38, a factory ship accompanied by killer boats operated in Australian waters. And during the winter seasons, 1936-37 to 1939-40, another floating expedition operated in the Antarctic. Production of whale oil was increased to 71 million pounds in the calendar year 1937, but fell to 27 million pounds in 1939. No floating expeditions have been undertaken this year, with the result that the domestic output of whale oil has been further reduced. The principal domestic whaling activity at present centers about a single shore station in California.

Whale oil in the United States is used principally in soap manufacture, although in Europe it is widely used in food products as well as in soap. Considerable quantities of whale oil have been imported by the United States during the past 20 years, mostly from Norway. But since 1934, when a 3-cent excise tax was levied on imports, imports have tended to decline, and totaled only 20 million pounds in 1939 compared with a 10-year (1924-33) average of 53 million pounds.